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ABSTRACT

Prompted by the current debate over tenure, the spread of teacher's unions, and the concern of legislators for providing a uniform teaching load in institutions of public higher education, there seems to be great interest in the whole area of faculty evaluation, as well as in the improvement of college and university teaching. The central purpose of evaluation should be to help a person improve his performance, whether that person is a student or a teacher. It appears, however, that most evaluation systems work primarily to reject people rather than to help them attain better performance. Several options are open to educational administrators in the field of faculty evaluation. One is the growth contract, a system under which every faculty member must state, at 4- to 5-year intervals, his personal goals for the next interval, even if he has tenure. Even on a campus with a tenure system, the faculty growth contracts inject a vital new dimension: the institutions expect faculty members to grow and change during their stay, and will help them to do so. Another alternative to traditional means of faculty evaluation is classroom observation of teachers either by colleagues and by video tapes. This would afford immediate feedback so that professors could improve their teaching before they developed bad methodologies. (HS)

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HOW TO EVALUATE FACULTY WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT THEM

HAROLD L. HODGKINSON

Prompted by the current debate over tenure, the wide spread of unionism, and the concern of legislators for providing a "uniform teaching load" in institutions of public higher education, there seems to be great interest in the whole area of faculty evaluation, as well as in the improvement of college and university teaching. In order to improve teaching, it seemed to me, one would have to motivate faculty to want to do better.

To deal with this topic, I reviewed the "standard literature" to find out what is known about faculty rewards (Dressel & Pratt, 1971; Hildebrand, Wilson, & Dienst, 1971; Mayhew, 1971; Parsons & Platt, 1968; and Sanford, 1962). There are time-and-motion studies that tell us how many hours a week a teacher engages in various professional activities (although I take some of these numbers with several grains of salt), there are studies indicating that faculty don't like to teach, there are other studies indicating that they do, there are studies of the academic market-place, and studies of departmental organization and faculty participation in campuswide governance. But there is precious little material on faculty aspirations, on how they set their goals, on where they get their kicks in life, on what they would like to be doing twenty years from now. Existing studies present faculty as hollow men; we learn little about them as people. Cottle's piece, "The Pains of Permanence" (to appear in a book of essays on tenure), gives more information on what it's like to be a faculty member than I find anywhere else, with the exception of Kingsley Amis' fine novel, *Lucky Jim*.

The point is vital in terms of constructing a viable reward system in that one has to know how "reward" is perceived by those who will be involved with the system, and the studies aren't too clear on this. The literature on faculty is not very helpful in terms of what threatens them either, although it is common knowledge that faculty do not change their ways rapidly. When change does take place, it is through a process described by Hefferlin (1969) as that of accretion–small additions to the existing structure which seem "safe." One could infer from this that faculty are probably very threatened by many things, but not much is known about them. Snyder's (1971) work at MIT is beginning to shed some light on the topic, but it would be difficult at the moment to work systematically toward reducing the areas of threat that inhibit faculty willingness to change because we simply don't know enough. Whatever these threats are, if recently expanding faculty unionization is any criterion, many faculty appear to find more security within a collective negotiation organization than a professional one.

If we turn to the problems of faculty assessment, we find many parallels to the issues of reward structures. The exact practices and procedures used in assessing a teacher's fitness for tenure are seldom clearly stated. Even if a faculty handbook states that tenure will be decided on the basis of judgments made about teaching effectiveness, research, and service, there is seldom any specific statement of how the assessment will be made. In many school systems (and some community colleges) the problem is handled chronologically; three years of service will move a teacher from step three to step four. While this system is easy and understandable, it dodges the central issue of how to make competent assessments.

Another easy solution to the assessment problem is that of making assessments of a teacher's ability to carry out behavioral objectives. There is little doubt that in terms of the acquisition of skill, defining behavioral objectives has helped teachers to move to a level of greater specificity in goal-setting and assessment. But it also seems that this process may cause teachers to avoid the more difficult task of inculcating values and attitudes, which, according to college catalogues, is an important part of a teacher's job. The behavioral objectives movement has gained strength in public schools and in some community colleges, but little in "prestige" colleges and even less in universities.

Neither the simple solution of chronological step systems nor behavioral objectives can deal with our need for a system that accepts the notion that teaching excelience can come in many different sizes and shapes. The research does show that there is no one ideal teacher type; good teachers can be short or tall, young or old, aggressive or shy, theatrical or calm. Good teachers spend no more time on preparation, reading papers, committees, etc., than do those nominated as poor teachers. Faculty and students nominate the same people as good teachers, but for different reasons (Hildebrand, et al., 1971).

Professors as Individuals

In addition to the necessity of making individualized judgments on competence, it is also important to remember that individuals change through time, and that these changes are probably accompanied by differences in aspirations as well as levels of competence. Recognition of these changes should also become part of the assessment system. The professorial life cycle is made up of certain obvious stages, such as neophyte graduate student, inexperienced instructor, first political involvement with department, tenure, chairman of a major committee, full professor, officer of a national association in his field, department chairman. An individual also has certain problems or "developmental tasks" which parallel these professorial cycles, such as solving the problem of fulfilling the demands for attaining tenure when these are in conflict with the demands of his home and family, of making peace between aspirations for prestige within his discipline as opposed to service to the campus, of getting his own children through college, of adjusting to retirement, etc. Ideally, an assessment system ought to take into account both life cycle and developmental task

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changes. There may also be departmental differences: physicists typically make their theoretical contribution to their field at a much earlier age than philosophers.

Professors in Organizations

In addition to these purely individual aspects of assessment and reward structures, we need to understand the importance of these structures in organizations. Almost every organization rewards people for two very different characteristics–competence and loyalty (Good, 1967).

As organizational imperatives change, new individuals with new skills must be brought in and allowed to develop leadership if the organization is to survive. As time goes on, however, those individuals will have to give way to still others, who will move up to the "front line." But no organization could survive with front-liners alone; there is also a great need for people who will be loyal to the organization, even though they are not in the front echelon. To answer this need, it is usually vital that a person who is no longer at the cutting edge of competence be moved out of the mainstream without damaging his ego. A reward structure may develop whereby, for example, a person who can no longer make it in the New York office is "promoted" to branch manager of the office in Fargo, North Dakota. He has increased his status (at least in a titular sense) while the organization in New York now perks merrily along.

Although higher education has few formal ways of dealing with this problem, it should be noted that some titles, such as Distinguished Service Professor, are sometimes reserved for senior faculty whose patterns of behavior have come to interfere with department aspirations. (One institution of higher education is rumored to have five assistant registrars, all former members of the faculty.) Any effective reward and assessment system, then, must take into account both the needs of individuals and the needs of organizations, even though there are inherent inconsistencies in getting the highest competence at the "cutting edge" while maintaining a large cadre of service-oriented people. The importance of this for higher education has been stressed in the distinction between "local" and "cosmopolitan" faculty members, as formulated by Gouldner (1957-8).

Some Goals for Faculty Assessment and Rewards

The central purpose of evaluation should be to help a person improve his performance, whether that person is a student or a teacher. Although this is theoretically true, my impression is that most evaluation systems work primarily to reject people rather than to help them attain better performance.

The assessment must be available *continuously* when the person, teacher or student, thinks he needs it. This means that year-end or term-end assessment, when a student or teacher is told why he failed, but has no chance to correct his performance, is not going to be terribly useful for either one. The individual who is being assessed should be helped to develop his own criteria for increasing his competency and understand the assessment feedback in terms of his own goals. Rather than encouraging leading from strength, the reward and assessment systems might encourage the person to improve on his weaknesses as well as improve in already strong areas. Such systems should also reflect in direct and specific ways the educational objectives and styles of both the individual teacher and the individual college or university.

At the faculty level, any such system must encourage collaboration between colleagues in order to improve teaching rather than set colleagues against each other. It is quite clear–at least to this writer–that such artificial status-producing devices as teacher-of-the-year awards, etc., do not accomplish this sort of collaboration.

Any system which attempts to get at assessing and rewarding "competency" in teaching must be highly flexible and individualistic, at least until better measures of teaching and learning can be developed. The uniform approach to defining teaching competence is perhaps at the heart of the issue. Standardizing teaching loads, in which it is felt that every faculty member should do the same thing, give the same number of seminars, have the same number of advisees, etc., is equivalent to the view that students' abilities can be measured by a single IQ or SAT score. We do know that some people are very good at lecturing and very poor at advising, and vice versa. Although there is some interest in team teaching and differentiated staffing in some colleges, few institutions have dared try the option of a flexible load in which evaluation would be based on what a teacher does and likes to do best, and therefore spends a large percentage of his time doing.

Fortunately, some are now managing to think about the educationally unthinkable–the notion that much of what a student learns is not learned in a college classroom. Many students are expressing a desire for some effort from the institution to help them integrate regular instruction with insights gained outside the classroom. Although this is extremely hard to assess, some institutions are expressing a new interest in the advising role of the faculty member, and arriving at the conclusion that advising students is an essential component of his role.

There also seems to be increasing openness to the idea of assessing a faculty member's performance. More people are beginning to feel that the major purpose of this kind of endeavor should not be to decide whether or not an individual is good enough to get tenure, but rather to help *all* teachers improve their teaching performance, whether or not they have tenure.

A Different Option: The Growth Contract

Some institutions are now turning to the concept of individualized learning contracts as the most effective way to help a student define his objectives and assess his attainments. Contracts are written both for the individual course and for the four-year program. At the course level, the instructor indicates what resources can be made available to help the student reach his goals, and concurs on the procedures of evaluating the student's progress. At the end of the quarter or semester, there are no questions about evaluation, as the procedures were written into the contract earlier. At Ottawa University, the New College at University

of Alabama, Empire State in New York, and Hampshire in Massachusetts, students work with a "primary advising committee" made up of faculty, sometimes another student, and outside experts in the student's field, to develop an overall contract. They also have individual course contracts in certain areas.

The next step, now being experimented with at Hampshire, Empire State, and several other institutions, is that of growth contracts for faculty members. This device is designed to undercut the traditional view that once you have tenure, no further improvement in teaching effectiveness is expected by the institution. (Indeed, if you get tenure at 35, and a full professorship at 45, the institution has no reward structure for you until the gold watch at 65.) Under this proposed system, every faculty member must state, at four to five year intervals, his personal goals for the next interval, even if he is on tenure. There are no one-year initial appointments, and the new faculty member is given a reasonable period—three or four years—to show that he can or cannot do the things indicated in his initial contract. Even on a campus with a tenure system, the faculty growth contracts inject a vital new dimension: The institution expects faculty members to grow and change during their stay, and will help them do so.

There are a number of interesting dimensions to this new approach to faculty evaluation. Rather than pulling the faculty apart, as the traditional tenure system does, the growth contract and its evaluation should operate to pull the the faculty together, as it is an undertaking in which *all* participate as colleagues in the best sense.

Also, this practice could be instituted immediately, without waiting for the tenure debate to be settled, because it is not a substitute for tenure, and could easily be made compatible with any existing system. (It would be hard to imagine a tenured professor objecting to being asked by the institution that pays his salary to state, in his own words, what he would like to do during the next four or five years of his professional life, what resources he would need, and how his progress in these areas should be evaluated.)

In addition to such purely intellectual matters as developing materials for a new course, faculty may mention the desire to acquire more skills in group processes, in the making up of student evaluation procedures, and in writing proposals more effectively; to take courses in areas they have never studied; to learn more about the entire campus functions, and how to ask better questions.

There undoubtedly will be problems with this new approach. It will probably be easier to implement it in small schools or small departments than in major university departments of over 100 persons. In addition, it would seem to be in complete disagreement with the AFT meaning of "contract," which is the same thing for everybody, with little or no concern for differences in goals or practices within a group. It is not yet known whether or not such a growth contract arrangement could be established in a college or university engaged in collective bargaining.

Objections may also come from groups like the AAUP, which may consider such an approach professionally demeaning and beneath the dignity of faculty members. My feeling is that this attitude of faculty genetic superiority, or the Paragon Syndrome, is precisely what is making the American public angry. The widespread adoption of something like the faculty growth contract model might convince the public and their representatives in state capitols and in Washington that college and university faculty really do want to improve their professional competence as teachers. Nothing is being forced on the faculty member in terms of what he is supposed to state in the contract; his only new obligation is to the concept of planning for personal and professional growth. But of course, by formulating the contract, those responsible for the growth and development of the institution will soon have a better base for their own planning; they will have a clearer notion of faculty goals and expectations, and can work to meet them on a systematic, rather than a crash basis.

Early indications suggest that the approach has genuine promise, and deserves to be tried out at a number of institutions. It is one of the few procedures in which the techniques of assessment are consistent with the educational objectives of the institution, and with a body of literature which deals with rewards and assessment.

Professors Observed—by Colleagues

Another practice worth implementing would be that of direct observation of classroom teaching by one's colleagues. Bard College in New York State elaborated and improved upon this basic idea to the point where it was central to decisions about promotion. In this plan every junior faculty member eligible for tenure or promotion is visited in class by several senior members of his department or division over a period of time. The senior member must consult the junior member before class to find out what is to be attempted and what the previous history of the class has been. He must then stay for the full length of the period, have a conference with the instructor after the class is over, and write a fairly extensive comment on what he has seen. A copy of this statement goes to the instructor and a copy goes to the department or divisional chairman. The reason for this is simply to make sure that everyone understands the reasons for the senior member's judgment. Junior members may visit the classes of their seniors to see them exemplify the skills that senior faculty mention in their evaluations. This also tends to have a salutary effect on the senior member's evaluations. Classroom observations now seem to be widely used in many institutions, including some departments at the University of California, Berkeley.

Professors Observed—on Television

Video tape, shown to be extremely useful in teacher training programs in schools of education, is still seldom used by college or university faculties. Here is a device which can "publish" good teaching, yet it often gathers dust in the audio-visual room. A faculty member can use it not only for "instant replay" discussions with colleagues throughout the year, but also could present some selected sections of tapes of his classes as evidence for faculty evaluation. Such tapes could be useful to faculty

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in-service and orientation seminars, and as a source for the development of criteria to be used in classroom observations. Admissions officers can even use them for recruiting.

Conclusion: It's Up to the Faculty

It is worth commenting that the college teacher is perhaps the only professional whose professional act is performed in the total absence of other professionals. Surgeons are usually assisted by other surgeons, lawyers operate in the relatively open arena of the courtroom, and other professions also operate in fairly visible ways. The sacredness of the closed door of the college classroom, however, still must be dealt with.

All the approaches mentioned in this paper are subject, of course, to human frailty. What approach is not? They provide for a richness of clinical and statistical interpretation, however, which the other methods of faculty evaluation do not. And the approaches discussed here have the critical advantage of suggesting that the institution wants all of its faculty to improve. Other alternative methods of faculty reward and assessment include the rumor mill, the secretarial kaffee klatsch, and the faculty cocktail party. They are currently very important sources of data, and are more subject to human frailty than the procedures discussed here.

A strong and diverse tapping of student views is essential, although no one advocates that students be the sole judge of faculty competence. Because student evaluations of faculty are usually in the form of heavily codified questionnaire returns, we may attribute too much weight to them, just as the ease of counting faculty publications makes us think that they constitute a qualitative as well as quantitative measure. Certainly students and administrators have the right to be included in the assessment of faculty. (Indeed, assessment of administrators, based on the five-year renewable contract for presidents recommended by president Kingman Brewster of Yale, may be just around the corner.)

Our need is for a fair, flexible evaluation system which will integrate clinical and statistical information to get at different perspectives and ways for putting them all together.

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